

Sawdust & Diamonds

Joanna Newsom

From the top of the flight
Of the wide, white stairs
Through the rest of my life
Do you wait for me there?

There's a bell in my ears
There's a wide white roar
Drop a bell down the stairs
Hear it fall forevermore

Hear it fall forevermore

Drop a bell off of the dock
Blot it out in the sea
Drowning mute as a rock;
And sounding mutiny

There's a light in the wings
Hits this system of strings
From the side while they swing;
See the wires, the wires, the wires

And the articulation
In our elbows and knees
Makes us buckle as we couple in endless increase
As the audience admires

And the little white dove
Made with love, made with love:
Made with glue, and a glove, and some pliers

Swings a low sickle arc
From its perch in the dark
Settle down
Settle down my desire

And the moment I slept I was swept up in a terrible tremor
Though no longer bereft, how I shook and I couldn't remember

Then the furthestmost shake drove a murdering stake in
And cleft me right down through my center
And I shouldn't say so, but I know that it was then, or never

Push me back into a tree
Bind my buttons with salt
And fill my long ears with bees
Praying: please, please, please,
Love, you ought not!
No you ought not!

Then the system of strings tugs on the tip of my wings
(cut from cardboard and old magazines)
Makes me warble and rise like a sparrow
And in the place where I stood, there is a circle of wood
A cord or two, which you chop and you stack in your barrow

It is terribly good to carry water and chop wood

Streaked with soot, heavy booting and wild-eyed;
As I crash through the rafters
And the ropes and pulleys trail after
And the holiest belfry burns sky-high

Then the slow lip of fire moves across the prairie with precision
While, somewhere, with your pliers and glue you make your first incision
And in a moment of almost-unbearable vision
Doubled over with the hunger of lions
'Hold me close', cooed the dove
Who was stuffed, now, with sawdust and diamonds

I wanted to say: why the long face?
Sparrow, perch and play songs of long face
Burro, buck and bray songs of long face!
Sing: I will swallow your sadness and eat your cold clay
Just to lift your long face

And though it may be madness, I will take to the grave
Your precious longface
And though our bones they may break, and our souls separate
- why the long face?
And though our bodies recoil from the grip of the soil
- why the long face?

In the trough of the waves
Which are pawing like dogs
Pitch we, pale-faced and grave,
As I write in my log

Then I hear a noise from the hull
Seven days out to sea
And it is the damnable bell!

And it tolls - well, I believe, that it tolls - for me!
It tolls for me!

And though my wrists and my waist seemed so easy to break
Still, my dear, I would have walked you to the very edge of the water
And they will recognise all the lines of your face
In the face of the daughter of the daughter of my daughter

and darling, we will be fine, but what was yours and mine
Appears to be a sandcastle that the gibbering wave takes
But if it's all just the same, then will you say my name:
Say my name in the morning, so I know when the wave breaks?

I wasn't born of a whistle or milked from a thistle at twilight
No, I was all horns and thorns, sprung out fully formed, knock-
kneed and upright
So: enough of this terror
We deserve to know light
And grow evermore lighter and lighter
You would have seen me through
But I could not undo that desire

Oh-oh, oh-oh-oh desire
Oh-oh, oh-oh-oh desire
Oh-oh, oh-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh desire

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Of the wide, white stairs
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Do you wait for me there